



Thriving in Babylon / Book of Daniel
Wk. 5 "The Art of Right Worship"
By Pastor Jody May

Daniel 3:13-30 ESV

The Fiery Furnace

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or **worship** the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not **worship**, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. **And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"**

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or **worship** the golden image that you have set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and **worship** any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." ³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.



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Thriving in Babylon... Where are we headed?

For all of Chapter 2 we said last week there is an overarching main point:

God's Wisdom and Power is what Supervises all of History.

And I want to keep reminding us of that point for it's the theme of the book. That's what we need to keep central in our thinking as we see Gods' people begin to confront that which got them in Babylon (the message of Jeremiah): Idolatry.

Idolatry, the worship of a 'being', an 'idea', or things outside of God for the purpose of getting something you want.

Idolatry is the sin that got Israel subdued by a foreign nation and now it was the thing that was going to destroy the remnant, the last bit of God fearers/worshippers among the Jews, unless God intervenes, first.

The **problem** is though, there is a **seductive danger** to idolatry because it **promises you big, but it never delivers. Illustration:**

In The Wounded Healer, Henri Nouwen retells a tale from ancient India: Four royal brothers decided each to master a special ability. Time went by, and the brothers met to reveal what they had learned.

"I have mastered a science," said the first, "by which I can take but a bone of some creature and create the flesh that goes with it."

"I," said the second, "know how to grow that creature's skin and hair if there is flesh on its bones."

The third said, "I am able to create its limbs if I have flesh, the skin, and the hair."

"And I," concluded the fourth, "know how to give life to that creature if its form is complete."

Thereupon the brothers went into the jungle to find a bone so they could demonstrate their specialties. As fate would have it, the bone they found was a lion's. One added flesh to the bone, the second grew hide and hair, the third completed it with matching limbs, and the fourth gave the lion life.

Shaking its mane, the ferocious beast arose and jumped on his creators. He killed them all and vanished contentedly into the jungle.

We too have the capacity to create what can devour us. Goals and dreams can consume us. Possessions and property can turn and destroy us—unless we first seek



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God's kingdom and righteousness, and allow Him to breathe into what we make of life. - Nathan Castens

Let me put it to you this way: **Nothing we make can deliver us only God can.**

The offer of Idolatry, to WORSHIP, in the text was proposed by Nebuchadnezzar as a way to forgo persecution and death, but just like the illustration, there is even a **greater danger** here, and that is of **blaspheming God and lying** about how something could be greater than Him (which I can tell you there is not one soul in heaven that believes that)! **Romans 1 The offer was a temporary avoidance of an unescapable ending only to receive an eternal punishment that has no escape.**

The devil was out to show that God wasn't that good, **he lies**, and he was using fear tactics to prove it! There is NOTHING as beautiful, as lovely, as awe inspiring as God especially in the form of Jesus His Son. All the world can offer is a way to disguise the ugliness of what we see and make by our hands. Worshipping the statue in the story didn't make Neb or Babylon look any prettier, instead it heightened its' ugliness and barbaric practices.

So, here's what we started to learn last week to combat this truth:

Idol WORSHIP blinds and binds while the WORSHIP of God reveals and redeems!

Idolatry and Christianity both share a component that needs to be practiced if it is to be considered a religion, and that is **WORSHIP**. The Aramaic word for Worship is: **ṣḡḡḡ** ܣܓܝܕ **segid** (1104a); (Ara.) corr. to 5456; *to do homage*:—did homage(1), worship(10), worshiped(1).¹ It is found 11 times in the book of Daniel and 10 of the 11 times it is found right here in chapter 3. It is the cause of angst for the king because he couldn't get it from the antagonists in the story and for that reason the Furnace was turned on and heated up **as capital punishment for this crime** – Neb was like, "Look how nice we are we have provided a way for you to escape death, just worship me." We also have got to remember, from Chapter 2, is that this was not necessarily all

¹ Thomas, R. L. (1998). [New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition](#). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.



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Nebuchadnezzar's idea, but that God orchestrated this test to show 1st, He alone is worthy to be praised and 2nd, that He is sovereign over all of History.

Proposal:

Today's lesson is how to **RIGHTLY WORSHIP**, will you reject the false gods – the people & ideas of this world that offer you temporary salvation; things that **BLIND** and **BIND** you to them OR will you adhere to **TRUE GOD WORSHIP** which **REVEALS** to you **TRUTH** and **REDEEMS** you from having to depend on this world.

You also are going to see how our application from last week plays out because instead of **REACTING** to a scary situation, these men were prepared/**PROACTIVE** and already had their minds made up to not worship anyone other than God. **And that's how you have to come to the threat of Idolatry!** You have to have it made up in your mind **FIRST** to worship God before the threat ever comes a knocking!

In learning to confront Idolatry this morning, in being Proactive, the Bible shows us 5 responses to the invite to worship. There are 3 responses to the invite of Creature Worship and there are 2 superior responses to the invite of God Worship, 5 in all.

1. The Plead to Worship the World. (vs.13-15)

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or **worship** the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not **worship**, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"



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The plead to worship the world and what it offers is always masked in fake politeness, in fake nicety, like the world is doing us a favor. First off Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were put in power by Neb, per Daniel's request, and if he can't get them to agree to the plead for worship it makes him look bad. It makes it look like the King is a bad judge of character and if these guys were running the provinces around Babylon, then what else is going on wrong around the capital. Would he have to give up his second in control Daniel, the leader of his wise men? The plead to worship is many times a plead to cover up what may have been a mistake in the eyes of the world.

Right now, the world, our government, is pleading with us to accept its' philosophies like transgenderism, CRT, and mask wearing, because there is a fear in our culture/government if we don't accept them, we actually **signal** to our communities **we don't think these things are right**. If that begins to get out and accepted, then the masses begin to think what else may be wrong? And if the masses begin to think things are wrong then those in power begin to lose their political clout. They can't stand that, and in return they would rather give up the lives of a people in our country that actually help curb bad behavior by their very presence.

Friends if the religious powers, the Jewish High Court System, in Jerusalem **2000 years ago gave up the perfect man**/Jesus, then don't think for one moment that our worldly government won't make a scape goat out of us either. But in that, consider that a compliment; that you remind them of the Son of God enough that you would get the honor and privilege of being offered up for the sake of the Gospel and the fame of Jesus!

Don't take the plead for world worship for it's usually all about **manipulation not preservation**. If that is where you are ready to go this morning, then look at how these guys replied to the offer.

2. The Denial to Worship the World. (vs.16-18)

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O



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king, that we will not serve your gods or **worship** the golden image that you have set up.”

There is no, “thank you very much for your kind offer” or “I appreciate your thoughtfulness for my safety” the guys went straight to the heart of the matter, **“Oh, King you are not in charge here, but God is.”** You see they remembered what Daniel had taught them through his intervention: God had been planning this encounter, He had orchestrated the capture of the people of God so that they may prove He alone is worthy to be worshiped in this world.

“Be it known to you O King”, points back to the time when their friend would have made a mystery, a dream in Chp. 2, known to him as well. This is the same situation O King, this has to do with that God above all other gods (Dan 2). Your power play to put Him under your feet by getting us to bow has failed, we will not do it. If our God desires to rescue us or not, is not the question, the issue is we cannot worship Him and you at the same time.

This brings to light the same biblical principle that Jesus taught us Himself in the gospel while teaching on how to view money.

Matthew 6:24 ESV

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Sharing worship doesn’t fly with God because even then there is the allusion that something can compare with Him. **The offer of the Gospel is to worship the only thing that nothing else can compare to.** You have seen it in the value of Jesus’ sacrifice for His Father, He never found anything greater than His Father to live and die for, and neither will you. And if you too are willing not to bow down you will have to eventually face the wrath that comes with it.

3. The Anger over not Worshipping the World. (vs. 19-23)

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the



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furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹ Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²² Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

The King's facial expression changed (v.19). Man, I remember when my daddy was alive, the fear he could strike in me by a look. It wasn't a snarl, it wasn't a yell, it was this look he had, **like a quiet violence behind his eyes**. I never wanted to find out in that moment what he was capable of doing. Unfortunately for our men, they saw this look, and they discovered why King Neb had such a scary rep as a ruler.

They had spurned the grace of this king in front of everyone and had basically, in a public way, said there was **something scarier than him**. He heats the furnace up 7xs normal. Seven is a perfect number in scripture which translates into Neb heating up the furnace to the perfect temp of instant incineration, it could go no hotter. He keeps all their clothes on, more to ignite them with like a good torch.

In his anger he even destroys some of his best men, his mighty men, his top warriors. It is to show the contrast of how a good king like David cared for His mighty men (**pointing to Jesus and how HE perfectly cared for His disciples**) as they grew in fame by fighting for their God. King Neb abused his, used them as instruments of wrath for wrongdoing done to him, and destroys them in the process. It's another small lesson of how the world really feels about those that work for them, everyone is expendable for the sake of idolatry.

What a scary scene, to face your death tied up and powerless to do anything about it. Such a scene would cause the bravest of people to scream in their mind, "What was I thinking!?" We have a Lord that was nailed to His cross and even in the height of His agony cried out, "Lord forgive them they know not what they do!" And this example is the moment of true revelation, for a



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person that truly worships God, this is where God strengthens faith, and whether He saves us or not, it does not matter, what we learn by bearing our own cross like Jesus did, is that God really is worth it, and there is even joy in death if it means proving to everyone else who is really worth it. This is how the world faces defeat, by the blood of the kingdom's martyrs. This is **RIGHT WORSHIP**, this is being PROACTIVELY ready so that when the challenge comes you ALREADY KNOW what to do!

Psalm 112:1,7-8, & 10

112 Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
who greatly delights in his commandments!

7 He is not afraid of bad news;

his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

8 His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,

until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

10 The wicked man sees it and is angry;

he gnashes his teeth and melts away;

the desire of the wicked will perish!

God always uses the examples of His beloved people, when they are abused, to cause the amazement of the powers that be. It is in the moments of shock and awe that the powers in this world can finally see God for who He is. Now let's look at what it looks like when Neb experiences what true worship looks like.

4. The Astonishment of God Worship. (vs. 24-26)

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was **astonished** and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.



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There is something here to be admired about King Neb that God created in him, **he keeps his word**. He threw them in, so no one can say they didn't trust Neb when he said he would do something. **God used that trait to get him to throw them in and he used his zeal to call them out!** This guy wanted to see what had happened, he wanted to see how this trick was done! Could it be that the God that communicated through Daniel was now walking in front of his face!?

The men in our story were not delivered by the King they were delivered by a God that **meets His people**, right where **they are**, when they need Him the **most**, when they are in **jeopardy**, when no one else can **get to them**, that is the **testimony** of your God! He is a God that delivers, whether He takes you into eternity or He brings you back from Sheol, it is still all done by His power and presence.

This setting points to an even more important point in time, where Jesus instead goes to a death, bound up, all **by Himself**, so that He keeps us from experiencing it. He keeps us from a fate worse than a fiery furnace, it's the death that is due to person under God's wrath for one's sin. No one gets through that furnace, that brush with death and survives, only a person that truly doesn't deserve death can come back from that.

Jesus goes into Hades itself and He comes back under His own power for He is THE KING, and He tells death to release Him, and more importantly, it has to! My friends I do not know what the future holds for the church in our land but this I do know, whatever the sentence may be, we can know the Peace of God in the face of adversity because we worship the one that has defeated death, and **can/will bring us back** one day with him to rule on this earth when He returns! ([Rev 20:4-6](#)) Tat it - For those that do not take the mark of the beast, **subservience to the world**, that is the mark by the way, it is a sign of world worship. That is RIGHT WORSHIP and when you have gone through your personal fires there are even greater things to look forward to.

5. The Reward of God Worship. (vs. 27-30)



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²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and **worship** any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." ³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Well, you have heard that before haven't you. How long did that loyalty last the first time with Daniel? The power in this scene is not provided by Neb.'s threat necessarily. The amazing picture we see here is the fact that the admittance to the power of deliverance by God. Neb had asked in v. 15 "***And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?***" Neb was answered not through Daniel but by God Himself; through God's actions! It is only chapter three in Daniel and God has already set Himself up as the greatest power not just in Jerusalem but in Babylon, He has already defeated all the other gods just like He did in Egypt. It means that God is not just the God of a small tribe of people in a small corner of the world. **He is now God of all the world!** It was through the fiery furnace, the temptation to worship the world, that God has shown that something greater than the world has come!

No wonder Daniel was motivated to get these Wise men to look for the coming of Christ in the days to come. People were one day going to see with their own eyes, in the flesh, the one that was walking around in the fire! People would see with their own eyes, hear with their own ears, touch with their own hands, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did in that furnace. People would see, **in** the incarnation of Jesus, a God that was finally worth worshipping!

Lastly, there is a blessing by Neb on these men. There is a vindication provided by the world that they were right. There are opportunities to be lifted up for us as well, not necessarily loved, but to be shown we were right about God. **That's my prayer family**, I don't need to be like or loved or



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valued I just want to be recognized that I showed that my God was worthy to be praised, who's with me!?

My friends there have been many stories of saints that have passed on before us, where some have experienced vindication while here on this earth and while many others have been praised after they were gone. It doesn't matter for Jesus made us this promise in Luke –

Luke 12:3-5 ESV

³Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

Have No Fear

⁴"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

Your suffering and good deeds for Him will be known. And better yet, respect not the world but **revere and worship the one that truly has the power to save or condemn**. The world can truly do neither. I hope you have seen today, the value in being proactive in choosing to worship the Lord, for He is deserving, good, and mighty to save eternally those that have endured their own trials well. Will you determine today who you will worship before the time comes of persecution and pressuring? For that is how you **RIGHTLY WORSHIP**, because if your mind is not made up now, it won't happen under pressure.

I want to leave you with this last verse, for it is a favorite of mine, and we of the May household have made it our family passage to be a challenge to us in how we live, and to hopefully make much of the God we love, as we ask those of our family to follow Him with us.

Joshua 24:14-15 ESV

Choose Whom You Will Serve

¹⁴"Now therefore fear the **LORD** and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and



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serve the LORD. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Highlands are you ready to **RIGHTLY WORSHIP** God this morning? Will you reject the false gods – the people & ideas of this world that offer you temporary salvation; things that **BLIND** and **BIND** you to them AND will you adhere to **TRUE GOD WORSHIP** which **REVEALS** to you **TRUTH** and **REDEEMS** you from having to depend on this world? Choose this day whom you will serve, be Proactive, and start being ready to find your true joy in living for someone that really is worth your all...

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father, that is worthy to be praised, for He has defeated all His foes.

Go in the name of the Son, that is worthy to be praised, for He has vanquished our death on His cross.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that is worthy to be praised, that will reveal through our lives the might and glory of our God, for those willing to serve Him.